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SUBJECT: SOCIAL SECTORS TO OVERSEE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On July 23, President Morales announced plans to have social sectors oversee the Constituent Assembly. Morales' statements were strongly criticized by opposition parties and citizen groups. While his recent declarations might be an attempt to reach out to social sectors that have been historically excluded, they have an anti-democratic ring that bears close monitoring. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On July 23, President Morales met with the leaders of various social movements and called upon them to "oversee" the Constituent Assembly. Morales warned that assembly members should only use their authority to carry out the will of the people, and said that the social movements would be "attentive" to their decisions. At the meeting, Morales also gained support for his proposal to elect an indigenous woman as president of the Assembly. (Note: Margarita Teran, a former leader of a women's cocalero union, is rumored to be a likely candidate. End Note.) Debate continues, however, over the proper voting procedures to elect the Assembly's president. The MAS prefers a simple majority vote, while the opposition prefers a two-thirds vote. Morales' Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party will meet in Sucre on July 27 and 28 to elect a president and present its agenda.

¶3. (SBU) Morales' announcement that social sectors would oversee the Assembly was strongly criticized by opposition parties, citizen groups, and the business community, which referred to his actions as "undemocratic" and "worrisome." Some expressed concern over statements by MAS Deputy Cesar Navarro who said that the popular bases could dissolve the National Congress if they wished. Others warned of the dangers inherent in placing too much power in the hands of social movements affiliated with the MAS.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: Many social sectors believe the MAS has not done enough to include indigenous and campesino leaders in government initiatives. As in December, MAS candidate lists in July contained few indigenous representatives (some say only six indigenous persons were elected to the Assembly). While some view the MAS' attempt at inclusion, however late, as positive, the implied threats of street pressure have an anti-democratic ring that bears close monitoring.

